IN TIFLIS

The day after our arrival in Tiflis, Jordania asked me to join the party's daily, *Bor'ba* (*Struggle*). The party had two newspapers, one in Georgian and the other in Russian. The first was designed primarily for rank-and-file party members; the second, *Bor'ba*, for the intellectuals and general public that could not read Georgian. Its chief editor was a Russian provincial journalist who had served in the Russian Caucasian army, had been stranded in Tiflis during the demobilization, and had more interest in Georgian wines than in Caucasian politics. We worked together for a week or two. Then he left Tiflis, and Jordania asked me to take over the newspaper. My heritage from my predecessor was a huge filing cabinet packed from top to bottom with empty bottles of all sizes, colors, and shapes.

Emma became the executive secretary of *Bor'ba*, I its chief editor. Commercial and financial matters were handled by the party treasurer. Our office was in a government building, and Jordania's apartment was on the same floor, with a door into our office. Very often he would drop in to chat for a moment about politics. Sometimes he would suggest the topic for the editorial. He had a rare flair for journalism; his idea of good political writing was very simple: "Each article must have an idea, at least a small one, and the reader must be able to grasp it."

The newspaper was no larger than a twelve-page tabloid, but, since it had no syndicated articles and few outside contributors, our editorial staff of four or five had to fill the entire paper, day after day. *Bor'ba* soon became popular with its readers. Rereading clippings, I find that it was indeed a good newspaper and served a worthy purpose by defending the freedom of a small nation.

Bor'ba's best friends were the Georgian workers and farmers. For them, this was a *Russian* newspaper and the only Russian paper that understood them and supported their aspirations. Emma and I once stopped at a poor farmhouse in a tiny hamlet. I do not recall what took us there—perhaps we were asking our way or wanted a glass of water. Rules of oriental hospitality did not allow the farmer to ask who we were, but he looked at us with undisguised curiosity. So I told him that we worked for *Bor'ba* and gave him my name. His Russian was very poor, but when he heard my name he said proudly, "I have a whole book of yours." And he produced a homemade scrapbook in which he had pasted a dozen articles of mine, though he could read only their titles.

Although *Bor'ba*, as the official organ of the party, was also the mouthpiece of the government, we had complete freedom in running the paper. Jordania, an old journalist himself, would sometimes give

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN